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AA#1

6/10/80

HUMAN RIGHTS HIGHLIGHTS

ARGENTINA: PEN PRISONER RELEASE PROSPECTS

SOHHCE: BA 4729

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full

() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade

Date Declassify on Reason

A well-informed Argentine official provided Embassy Buenos Aires in early June with the following accounting of PEN (held on executive authority) prisoners:

- about 1600 persons are being held for other than common crimes;
- of the 1600, 800 have been tried and sentenced in military or civilian courts;
- before the end of 1980, the government plans to reduce the 1600 figure to approximately 1000, with roughly 300 "hard core" cases still remaining outside the judicial system;
- junta meetings to consider lists of proposed releases will be held in June and October; the first group of prisoners released is expected to include about 200 detainees, most whom will be freed under a program of continuing supervi

The estimated 300 "hard core" cases include those prisoners who are considered too dangerous for release but who, for various reasons be tried or retried under present laws. The Argentine official note consideration was presently being given to special legislation that would permit civilian courts to try these cases under a "clear and p danger" concept for which, he claimed, there were precedents in Eur law.

Embassy Buenos Aires notes that the Argentine's figures on de fall somewhat shy of the 1800 prisoners counted by the US Consul 1 when he visited prisons. The prospect of a reduction to about 10

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December has been mentioned by other Argentine officials, and the reduction of uncharged detainees to 300 is in line with predictions made to General Goodpaster during his January visit to Buenos Aires.

INR Comment: The reported plans ^{for} ~~from~~ PEN prisoner releases are credible. Argentine leaders believe that relations with the US are improving, and they probably view prisoner releases as a significant, visible area in which they can be responsive to human rights criticism and, thereby, maintain the positive momentum in bilateral contacts. Intra-military disagreement over the projected releases will probably be minimized by the decision to move very slowly and cautiously on the 300 "hard core" cases.

INR/IAA: J. Buchanan

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